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SUBJECT: LEFT'S ROUT IN NORTH BENGAL - ONE MORE NAIL IN ITS WEST
BENGAL COFFIN?

[¶1.](#) (SBU) The shaken Left Front in West Bengal was dealt another setback in the September 13 Siliguri municipal elections. The All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) and Congress Party alliance won 30 of the 47 wards (it previously represented 9) to break the Communist Party of India - Marxist (CPI-M)'s 30 year-old stranglehold on the northern municipality.

[¶2.](#) (SBU) Since the CPI-M's May 2009 disastrous performance in the national elections, the AITC has won every election in West Bengal that it has contested - be it the August state assembly bypolls or the recent Siliguri municipal elections. The leader of the opposition in the state assembly confidently told PolOFF that the trend would continue through the Kolkata Municipal Elections in 2010 and the West Bengal state assembly elections in 2011. Remarking on the Siliguri defeat, the leader of the Left Front publicly opined that while Siliguri voters may have voted for "change over development", the election results from this municipality of a quarter million inhabitants are neither representative nor predictive for the state as a whole. Unfortunately for the CPI-M led Left Front, most political analysts think they are and that the 33-year uninterrupted CPI-M rule of West Bengal is drawing to a close.

Comment

[¶3.](#) (SBU) While political winds in India can shift swiftly, at this point post concurs with the prevailing political consensus that communist rule in West Bengal is approaching its end. However, it is too early to say whether the ouster of the communists from power will be permanent or merely a temporary blip. Much will depend on what the AITC and Congress combine can deliver once in power in West Bengal and whether they can remain united over time.

PAYNE